

## **Chapter 6: Professional Development**

What teachers know and can do is the single most important factor in promoting student learning. Teaching is a knowledge-based profession and teachers, like other professionals, need to be continually informed on the latest developments in content and teaching strategies. This is especially true for foreign language teachers, given the rapid developments in research on how the brain works and how students acquire second languages.

Teachers are ultimately responsible for teaching the content called for in the Framework. This content is rich and intellectually challenging. The goals of professional development are to provide classroom teachers with the knowledge and skills they will need to implement the guidelines contained in the Framework and to ensure that prospective teachers will be prepared to effectively teach foreign languages. Assistance in achieving these goals is provided through the topics contained in this chapter: long-term professional development and support, professional development and retention of new teachers, district and site programs for professional development, considerations for designing professional development programs, undergraduate preparation, and taking individual responsibility for professional development plans. This Framework provides a basis for addressing all six of these aspects of professional development for foreign language teachers.

To address their professional development needs, teachers need to attend short courses and workshops offered by local districts, colleges, universities, independent consultants, and professional organizations. Programs for teachers should be evaluated independently to determine their usefulness. A key component in assessing

professional development programs is measuring their contribution to improvement of student achievement.

### ***Long-Term Professional Development***

Participating in ongoing professional growth and learning is the responsibility of all foreign language teachers. Teachers need to continually and regularly sustain and increase their knowledge of the foreign language, the target cultures, and foreign language teaching strategies. Long-term professional development must be expected, actively encouraged, and rewarded both by school administrators and by state and national efforts. Support from institutions of higher education and other institutions with expertise in foreign languages and foreign language education must be enlisted in an effort to make opportunities for high-quality learning environments readily available to all foreign language teachers. It is important that foreign language teachers develop collegial relationships with experts in second language acquisition in universities and other institutions. Over the years every teacher of foreign languages should have the opportunity to engage in exchanges and field work in the countries and communities where the target language is spoken. Long-term professional development programs in foreign languages should be routinely subject to external assessment to ensure that they achieve their goals toward enhancing the skills and knowledge of teachers. Teachers should be encouraged to share the benefits of their long-term professional development, as appropriate, with their colleagues in local in-service training programs and through teacher networks. Teachers' leadership and participation in national and local professional organizations that support student learning and achievement of the

Language Learning Continuum are valued as a hallmark of the teachers' professionalism.

***Professional Development and Retention of New Teachers***

Accepting the concept that all teachers benefit from professional development activities, new teachers, because they do not have the benefit of experience, may need additional professional development assistance. School administrators and colleagues must take steps to help these teachers succeed in the classroom. Careful placement and active mentoring can often help. The following activities can alleviate the isolation that can be a problem for all teachers, but which is most acute during the first year of teaching.

To prevent new teachers from becoming isolated, administrators should set up activities that provide ongoing collegial support to new teachers. The focus of this support may be to share successful lessons and teaching approaches, and to coach one another on how to improve student achievement. Experienced teachers play an important role in this mentoring and collegial support not only in schools, but also in districts and professional networks for new teachers or teachers new to teaching foreign language. Links can be made by providing time and opportunities for mentors and new teachers to review and discuss strategies for teaching the content of the Framework using district-adopted curricular materials and lessons. In this way new teachers not only receive support on instruction and classroom management, but also gain confidence by receiving assistance in improving lessons. School and district administrators should support such in-house efforts by making time and space available

and by bringing in qualified foreign language specialists to help with these developmental activities.

***District and Site Programs for Professional Development***

Districts have the responsibility for providing teachers with opportunities and resources to participate in professional development activities. Such provisions may include the following:

- Organizing and implementing specific activities appropriate for foreign language teachers;
- Providing funding for teacher participation in professional development activities sponsored by the school district, county offices of education, universities, and special projects such as the California Foreign Language Project;
- Developing an annual schedule of professional development activities;
- Providing release time for teacher participation;
- Providing inservice activities that assist teachers in more effectively implementing instructional materials; and
- Providing workshops on how to gather and analyze data on student performance.

In addition, it is the responsibility of site administrators to establish collegial support among foreign language teachers, especially for new teachers. This may take the form of establishing meetings where foreign language teachers share effective instructional strategies with one another, assigning experienced teachers to serve as

mentors for new teachers, and providing the opportunity for teachers to visit other classrooms.

### ***Considerations for Designing Professional Development Programs***

Since professional development is essential to implementing the Language Learning Continuum outlined in this Framework, a variety of considerations should be examined when professional development activities are being designed. Any specific professional development program may be able to deal with only a few considerations each year. In deciding how to balance these considerations, teachers and school district administrators must have a clear understanding of school or district goals for professional development. The following considerations play an important role in planning professional development programs:

### ***Implementation of the Language Learning Continuum***

The emphasis and focus of all professional development programs in foreign languages is on the effective implementation of the content and the Language Learning Continuum presented in this Framework. Individuals who provide professional development programs must be willing and able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their recommendations for the typically diverse California classroom. They must be competent in the foreign language and competent teachers of teachers. They must also be competent at managing classrooms effectively, and in helping teachers learn effective instructional strategies. These competencies come from experience, demonstrated success teaching students, and academic preparation and study.

Programs with lasting influence are usually long term and locally based, with teachers playing a role in planning and evaluating implementation.

### ***Maximizing Instructional Time***

Effective professional development enables teachers to maximize instructional time. Teachers can be helped in resolving both language-specific classroom management issues (e.g. structuring interactive communication activities) and more generalized management concerns (e.g., dealing with an inappropriately high classroom noise level, frequent tardiness or absences, or inattention). Program activities may be structured to raise teachers' proficiency in the foreign language. As their proficiency increases, teachers will find that their comfort levels in using the target language will also increase, as will their ability to use a variety of instructional strategies and progress/monitoring assessments to ensure that all students are learning.

### ***Meeting Diverse Student Needs***

Professional development programs should be designed to help teachers and administrators expand their understanding of student differences, diverse cultures, and specific instructional implications. While meeting the diversity of student needs, teachers must know which aspects of the Language Learning Continuum to spend more time on and assess. Students' previous knowledge and experience in foreign languages are significant factors in deciding what to emphasize, what to revisit, and when to spend more time on a given topic or function. Thus, professional development programs should focus both on foreign language proficiency for students and on those instructional strategies that best achieve it (see Chapter 4).

***Parent Involvement***

The extent to which parents are involved in and knowledgeable of a school's foreign language program influences the extent to which students succeed. Therefore, it is valuable to provide teachers with staff development programs that increase this involvement. Programs should help teachers develop various strategies to help parents become effectively involved in the foreign language education of their children.

***Assessing Student Progress***

Teachers should be able to use various forms of assessment, including methods of monitoring student progress. When such assessments reveal that students are not progressing at expected stages along the Language Learning Continuum, teachers need to employ appropriate strategies. Staff development activities can provide teachers with a repertoire of such strategies.

***Articulation***

Teachers need an understanding of how the content they are teaching is related to the content taught at previous levels and how their teaching will prepare students for foreign language instruction at later levels. As described in Chapter 8, "Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Resources," well-designed instructional materials will greatly facilitate this goal. But at the same time, in-service training or other activities should show teachers how their teaching is an integral part of the Language Learning Continuum and how they can develop strategies for linking their teaching to material for earlier and later levels (e.g., identifying review materials for improving students' foundational skills).

### ***Undergraduate Preparation***

Young adults who excel in their study of foreign languages are candidates for recruitment into the foreign language profession. Their recruitment involves support through pre-service preparation. Given the shortage of highly trained foreign language teachers in California, schools and undergraduate institutions must actively encourage talented foreign language students to enter teaching careers. Undergraduate internships in kindergarten through grade twelve classrooms, followed up with guided reflection and discussion, can be effective recruitment tools and can enhance the value of undergraduate foreign language education. Student teachers will enhance their preparation by collaborating with master teachers.

### ***Taking Individual Responsibility for Professional Development Plans***

Teachers of foreign languages need professional development that will broaden their knowledge of the foreign language and culture and that will assist in teaching both to students. They need professional development that will improve managing and monitoring student learning. Foreign language teachers need time to reflect on their practices and to learn from experience. They need to become members of teaching and learning communities. Within the range of professional development resources, teachers need to create an individual professional development plan. To do this, they may choose from a wide range of activities. Following are suggested activities for teachers:

- Participate in workshops on providing instruction that reinforces the total school curriculum;



- 1705 • Participate in workshops on providing an articulated curriculum of continuous  
1706 and sequential study;
- 1707 • Study, work, reside, or travel in the target language areas;
- 1708 • Take post-baccalaureate courses or seminars conducted in the language;
- 1709 • Interact with other speakers of the target language;
- 1710 • Interact extensively with native speakers;
- 1711 • Participate in seminars, workshops, conferences and programs in the U.S. and  
1712 in other countries;
- 1713 • Participate in cultural exchange programs to gain new insights into the culture  
1714 studied;
- 1715 • Attend workshops and courses on curriculum content, intercultural education,  
1716 technology, and language assessment;
- 1717 • Participate in faculty discussion groups, peer observation and mentoring, and  
1718 task forces that address learning outcomes, instructional approaches, and  
1719 assessment techniques;
- 1720 • Dialogue with teachers at all levels of instruction;
- 1721 • Take additional courses related to language acquisition, language teaching, and  
1722 the study of the target language and its cultures;
- 1723 • Maintain a current professional library of books, periodicals, and other media  
1724 that focus on language, culture, and methodology;
- 1725 • Engage in appropriate research activities and collect and analyze data to inform  
1726 their instructional practices;
- 1727 • Actively participate in department and interdisciplinary faculty development  
1728 opportunities, especially in their district or region;

- 1729       • Participate in programs for the development of teaching competency and  
1730       leadership skills;
- 1731       • Gain experience through participation, service and leadership in school,  
1732       community, and professional organizations;
- 1733       • Assume various roles in professional organizations; and
- 1734       • Seek membership on education reform task forces and committees.
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